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NEWS RELEASE

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Winter Weather Awareness Day: Be Prepared – Be Informed!

The National Weather Service, State and Local Emergency Management Agencies including the City of Branson Fire Department have proclaimed November 18, 2015 as Winter Awareness Day.

“Since we are fast approaching the winter season, this is the perfect time for our citizens to get prepared for winter snow and freezing temperatures,” stated Ted Martin, City of Branson Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director. Winter storms in the Ozarks may range from a deep freeze, icing conditions with freezing rain, to moderate snow over a few hours to blizzard conditions. “The aftermath of any of these may impact our community for days or even weeks as experienced in the Springfield region with the ice storm several years ago,” stated Chief Martin. “Therefore, now is the time to prepare before winter sets in with colder weather and snowflakes begin to fall.”

As you prepare for winter weather, become familiar with terms commonly used by the National Weather Service. A **Winter Storm Watch** indicates that severe winter weather may affect your area. A **Winter Storm Warning** indicates severe weather conditions are definitely on the way and to take precautions. Add to this the term Ice Storm Warning issued when ice accumulations of a quarter-inch or more may be expected.

Be prepared at home with basic resources such as a radio with fresh batteries, a supply of non-perishable food, bottled water, keeping rock salt on hand to melt snow on sidewalks or driveways, securing an alternate fuel source, insulating attics and installing storm windows this fall, and winterizing the family car. “Also, keep a winter car kit in the trunk including a blanket, hat and gloves, flashlight, booster cables, and a first aid kit,” stated Chief Martin. If using fossil fuels such as propane, natural gas, or kerosene, for example, firefighters remind you to have a Carbon Monoxide detector in the home. Firefighters also remind you to test your smoke alarms each month.

During severe winter weather, keep informed for fast breaking weather information provided by local media outlets. One key tool to use to get immediate weather information as well as winter weather watches and warnings is to purchase an All Hazard Risk Radio commonly known as a severe weather alert radio. These units, if purchased with the Specific Area Message Encoding (S.A.M.E.) may be programmed to alert for key weather information in your specific county. City of Branson residents may also sign up BransonALERTS, a system to provide severe weather warnings sent to home, business or cell phones for instant information. Sign up on the City’s web site at www.bransonmo.gov.

The fire department also encourages planning and preparedness when traveling during winter months. “If you must drive in a winter storm, drive defensively and allow more time to get to your destination. Put that seatbelt on and always operate your vehicle with its headlights on too. Let someone know your travel route and time to expect you. If you are caught in your car in dangerous winter conditions, please remain in your car and wait for help,” stated Chief Martin.

For more information about preparing for winter weather, contact the fire departments Technical Services Division at (417) 243-8580 and remember to use the resources of local media for fast breaking weather alerts and for safety information during and after a winter storm.

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